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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Fourteenth session
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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Reports provided by specialized agencies of the United Nations on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Introductory note

1. On behalf of the Committee, the Secretariat invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), on 13 June 1994, to submit to the Committee, by 1 September 1994, a report on information provided by States to FAO on the implementation of article 14 and related articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would supplement the information contained in the reports of those States parties to the convention which will be considered at the fourteenth session. These are the latest reports of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Finland, Mauritius, Norway, Peru, Russian Federation, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Uganda.

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2. Other information sought by the Committee refers to the activities, programmes and policy decisions undertaken by FAO to promote the implementation of article 14 and related articles of the Convention.

3. The report annexed hereto has been submitted in compliance with the Committee's request.

Annex

[Original: English]

REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AT ITS FOURTEENTH SESSION*

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FAO ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES TO PROMOTE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

FAO continues to promote the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women through its own Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development. The Plan of Action, adopted in 1989, provides a framework for addressing rural women's concerns by implementing both the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) provisions on rural women and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies (NFLS) for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000. Two crucial themes underlie the Plan. First, in the short term, women's roles must be recognized and documented, and policies must be redirected to provide them with greater access to productive resources. Second, over the longer term, rural women require greater access to political power and the legislative process to permanently improve their access to and control over productive resources. Among the many activities undertaken by FAO, priority is given to the following.

I. INCREASING RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S ROLES

A. Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Training. For over a decade it has been recognized that, if women are to benefit from and participate in development efforts, development specialists and policy-makers must be sensitized to gender issues, and national and UN System capacity must be developed to permit gender-responsive project, programme and policy development. Gender analysis training therefore became FAO's first priority in implementation of the Plan of Action.

Over the past biennium, FAO has carried out gender analysis training with national-level WID machineries and selected counterpart groups in Member Countries. The impact of this training, however, has not been as great as anticipated, as many development efforts still fail to adequately consider gender. This has served to underline the need to review the effectiveness of the WID/gender training and tools provided by international agencies. In 1992 FAO undertook such a review and, in collaboration with Gender and Development trainers and managers from UNDP and the World Bank, developed a four-year Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEGA) Training Programme.

In order to lay the foundations for the development of the SEGA Programme, a 'Common Theoretical Perspective' was developed, under the supervision and direction of FAO, that integrates macro (inter-household) and micro (intra-household) level socio-economic and gender analysis for environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation, equity and empowerment. The analysis is intended to provide essential inputs for programme and policy formulation and is founded upon stakeholders' participation, negotiation and conflict resolution procedures rather than on the more traditional top-down programme/project formulation procedures based upon technical expertise.

In 1993, FAO also initiated the development of a Field Manual to operationalize the concepts and methodologies discussed in the Common Theoretical Perspective. The Field

Manual includes sector-specific Technical Supplements which, to assure their utility, will be developed by the technical units of the appropriate UN agencies together with socio-economic and gender issues specialists. Draft supplements were or are being produced for Dairy Development, Fish Processing, Farm Mechanization, Aquaculture, Inland Fisheries, and Farming Systems Development.

In addition to this documentation, a portfolio of SEGA Training and Training-of-Trainers packages will be developed, including a variety of inter-active textual and non-textual tools (such as simulations, role playing, small group discussion, participant presentations, case studies, videos, field visits, computer programmes and databases) and a flexible and participatory training methodology.

B. Improving Statistics. FAO continues to provide Member Governments with critical inputs to develop the quantitative data necessary for gender-responsive policy decision-making. Specifically, as a follow-up to the 1991 FAO-organized Inter-Agency Consultation on Women and Statistics (IACWS), assistance is being provided to accurately measure the contributions of rural women to agricultural production, environmental sustainability, poverty alleviation, food security and nutrition.

As a follow-up to the IACWS, FAO carried out an extensive review of the Programme for the 1990 World Census of Agriculture in preparation for the Year 2000 Round. This review suggested changes to the Programme for the World Census of Agriculture that would permit improved collection of data on human resources disaggregated by gender.

FAO is seeking means to implement these improvements before the Year 2000 Round. Efforts toward this end have included:

- Implementation of a project to improve the collection and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data in agriculture and rural development through agricultural censuses and surveys. Under the project, national case studies on improving gender disaggregated data were prepared for several countries in the Near East. These reports were discussed at a workshop held in Cairo, 26-28 July 1994. Based on the results of the workshop, guidelines will be produced for analogous undertakings in other countries in the Near East and for similar activities in other regions of the world.

- In Africa, a programme to compile statistical databases on women's work and working conditions in the agricultural sector.

- In four specific African countries, and in collaboration with their national statistical departments, a review of existing agricultural survey questionnaires to increase the gender relevance of the information collected.

Further, FAO is remodelling its computerized system for agricultural planning and policy analysis (CAPPA). The new system, K2, will be capable of handling more human resource data disaggregated by gender, especially in modules dealing with the labour force, income distribution, nutrition and population. K2 will help analysts to assess the impacts of

a wide range of agricultural policies on these key variables and should be fully operational by the end of 1994.

II. POLICY ADVICE

ESHW tends to consider the provision of WID/gender-responsive policy advice in a broad context that includes training on WID machineries, and providing more traditional, general policy advice to member governments.

A. Macro-Economic Policies. There is a great need to improve understanding of the impact of macro-economic policies on rural women. While a fair amount of research has been conducted on the negative impact of stabilization and structural adjustment programmes on women, there has been considerably less on the impact of specific agricultural and rural development policy decisions related to such programmes, such as those regarding agricultural prices, marketing and processing, credit, fiscal and monetary programmes affecting the rural population, food security, and farm and household policy impact monitoring. The lack of such research reflects: (i) a failure on the part of policy-makers, analysts and advisors to recognize the significance of such policy decisions on disadvantaged populations; (ii) the lack of macro-economic policy specialists with social and gender sensitivity; and (iii) a paucity of relevant data and indicators.

In response to this situation, FAO has been working to permit integration of gender issues in training modules for mid-level policy planners. Two modules currently being developed are: "Social Impact of Agriculture Policies" and "Food Security." In 1994, FAO will continue to incorporate socio-economic and gender issues into macro-level policy training and modules in such areas as agricultural pricing, marketing and processing, fiscal and monetary programmes, and trade and exchange rates.

B. Strengthening WID Machineries. FAO policy advice activities have also sought to strengthen national WID machineries in government agencies and NGOs concerned with rural women, especially to increase their capacity to participate more effectively and actively in policy formulation processes.

During the biennium, a majority of the requests for policy assistance received by FAO have focused on the creation or strengthening of national-level WID machineries. These machineries are governmental units established separately, or within line ministries and/or NGOs, that are concerned with promoting the interests and concerns of women. Strengthening these units simultaneously strengthens the voices of the rural and urban women who are their clients.

In 1993, the activities undertaken by FAO to strengthen WID machineries have included:

- In Egypt, a project document entitled "Operationalizing the Unit of Policy and Coordination for Rural Women in Agriculture" was finalized.

- In the Congo, a TCP project to support the Ministry for the Integration of Women in Development was formulated. In collaboration with WFP, a similar project was formulated to assist the Ministry in developing field activities for extension training, food processing, road maintenance and the environment.

- In Algeria, the design of a WID component to the Work Programme of the National Chamber of Agriculture was developed.

- In the Central African Republic, institutional and technical reinforcement was given to the newly created WID Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture through the elaboration of a strategy for the integration of women in development.

- In order to strengthen WID Units in the Ministries of Agriculture or Ministries of Women's Affairs, 12 missions were carried out in African countries. Based on these experiences, a publication on "Policies and Development Strategies to Benefit Rural Women" was prepared that could serve as a guideline to develop policies and strategies to benefit rural women.

- FAO also participated in elaborating regional programmes of action for the integration of gender in agriculture and rural development policy in Asia and the Pacific and the Near East.

C. General Policy Advice. In addition to the policy implications of strengthening WID machineries, FAO engages in other activities designed to influence policy formulation at the country level. Examples of these activities include:

- In Indonesia, a national project for the incorporation of gender factors in all policies and action programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture was undertaken with the technical support of ESHW.

- In China, a review that provided guidelines on gender roles in the changing rural economy was supported by FAO.

- In the Philippines, support was given for the Planning Division of the Ministry of Agriculture to develop a project to integrate rural women's concerns into the agricultural planning process.

- FAO, UNDP, WB, UNEP, and WFP collaborated with the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MOALR) in the preparation of Egypt's agricultural strategy for the 1990s, which highlighted the roles of women.

- FAO also contributed to the work undertaken by a mission to Jordan to integrate gender issues into their programme for the agriculture sector, as well as to strengthen Jordan's WID coordinating unit.

- FAO has also formulated comprehensive national food security strategies and action programmes, giving particular attention to the problems women face.

- In support provided by FAO to several Near East countries undertaking structural adjustment programs, special attention is being given to the establishment of a sound and balanced relationship between economic growth and the well-being of rural men and women.

III. ENHANCING WOMEN'S ROLES AND RESOURCES

In developing countries, rural women's lack of access to productive resources continues to present a major obstacle to increasing productivity, enhancing food security and achieving environmental sustainability in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It is also a principle cause of rural poverty. Only by making concerted efforts to improve women's access to land, water, technology and inputs, credit, markets, extension, training and population education, will major inroads be made toward achieving sustainable development.

The project development and monitoring activities and related Regular Programme support undertaken in the past biennium to enhance women's roles and increase their access to productive resources vary considerably across the Organization. Often, pilot studies and activities are launched and lessons learned are then integrated into follow-up phases or similar projects in other areas. The experience gained is also used to strengthen policy advice activities. While many examples can be given of FAO's efforts, only a few of the more innovative activities are highlighted in the following pages. The examples given focus on three critical areas: women's groups; financial resources; and, technical training and extension services.

A. Strengthening Women's Groups and NGOs. As a complement to strengthening WID machineries, and to enhance rural women's access to resources, FAO assists rural women to develop capacities to mobilize politically to confront discrimination, not as individuals, but as more powerful groups. This assistance provides strategic education and training inputs, helps in the formation of women's organizations that can address political agendas, and increases women's access to and control of economic resources.

An example of a major innovative effort to achieve these objectives is provided by the FAO-sponsored Latin American and Caribbean Network of Institutions and Agencies in support of Rural Women. The members of the Network are mainly women professionals, technicians of national institutions, NGOs working in the area of women in rural development, and leaders of farm women's organizations. The purpose of the Network is threefold: (i) to exchange information at national and international levels among governmental institutions, NGOs and farmers' organizations working for rural women; (ii) to represent rural women's interests in social and economic development policies, both at the national and regional levels (within bodies such as the Andean parliament and CARICOM); and (iii) to identify, validate and diffuse organizational and productive alternatives that can ensure the sustainable use of natural resources in agricultural production activities involving women farmers.

During 1993, FAO prepared project proposals for submission to the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands that would provide support to both the Andean and Central American and Caribbean subregions, to strengthen network activities, especially at the

provincial level and with farmers organizations. FAO also implemented a letter of agreement with the Commission for Women in Rural Development (CODEMUR) in Honduras to (i) strengthen network activities at the municipal level, (ii) solidify the involvement of federations of farmers, and (iii) publish the experience in order to share lessons with other Spanish-speaking countries.

Moreover, in October 1993, FAO, in collaboration with the Network's Subregional Coordinators, held a 3-day workshop for National Coordinators in St. Lucia for the English-speaking Caribbean Subregion, to formulate a plan of activities in 1994-95.

Another example can be found in the Near East. FAO has developed, in coordination with Member Governments, donors and NGOs, a Policy Framework and Regional Programme of Action for Women in Agriculture in the Near East (RPAWANE). This programme will be based on an interactive participatory approach where people, ideas, institutions and resources can complement and support each other. This is expected to strengthen broad based regional cooperation and avoid fragmented efforts.

B. Financial Resources. The availability of institutional credit is important to small producers in developing countries since it enables them to engage in activities in more profitable sectors of the economy that ultimately will improve their living standards. In general, credit is intended to finance the acquisition of inputs and, especially for women, to permit investment in processing and marketing facilities and services. FAO experiences have demonstrated that a number of combined actions must be taken to increase women's access to credit.

(1) Systematizing Loan Procedures. Revolving funds and credit programmes are not known for their high recovery rates, due in part to the lack of clear arrangements for loan management and repayment. In 1991 and 1992 FAO developed and introduced a set of management guidelines that clearly define how to establish and manage a revolving fund. The subjects broached include interest rates and charges, repayment periods, and procedures for arrears control and payment rescheduling which safeguard the purchasing power of the fund. These guidelines have been introduced in fisheries credit schemes across Africa. They have had significant positive impacts on loan recovery rates, which in many programmes are now at over 90 percent.

In addition, FAO participated in an International Consultation on "Increasing Rural Women's Access to Credit" and in the field testing of bookkeeping materials for training semi-literate women, which were developed by the FAO-WID Officer in Ghana.

(2) Establishing Revolving Funds. UNFPA is funding a programme in China directed at minority women in poor, remote rural counties in eight provinces. This programme, managed by FAO, is attacking the population problem at its roots, which is related to poverty and the low status of women, by seeking to improve the status of rural women through income generating activities. The key to the project has been the establishment of a revolving fund for small enterprise development. Loans from this fund are accompanied by a package for women that includes literacy education, agricultural and technical skills training, family planning, health care, and small enterprise management. At the end of 1993, nearly 10,000 women were involved in the groups and enterprises.

(3) Reducing Transaction Costs. The FAO Microbanking System, a computerized software system, has demonstrated its effectiveness in reducing transaction costs. It is now operational in more than 250 banks and bank branches in five countries in Asia, where the number is expected to reach 330 by the end of 1993. A survey conducted in the Philippines indicated that women constitute 70 percent of the clientele served by banks equipped with the System.

(4) In-Kind Revolving Funds and Group Savings. Since 1985, Norway and the Arab Gulf Programme have been funding an integrated agricultural development project in Sierra Leone that seeks to improve household food security and increase women farmers' cash income. The project works to develop groups capable of managing new production and marketing schemes without a need for outside support. As of mid-1993, some 3000 women farmers were organized in 174 groups across 70 villages in northern Sierra Leone. Many of these groups have established savings and credit schemes where members make monthly contributions to build up investment funds. Members decide how to invest and how to provide credit.

(5) Increasing Incomes and Savings through Grain Banks. FAO is implementing a cereal bank project targeting rural women in the Sudan with the support of UNDP, UNIFEM and WFP. Traditional grain storage structures have been improved and eleven cereal banks developed in project areas. Rather than selling cereals to traders from larger marketing centres, women sell directly to these banks. This has two advantages: first, by retaining grain locally, food security is enhanced for the villagers; and second, by reducing transport costs, women obtain a higher selling price for grains and a lower buying price for seed, thereby reducing the need for credit.

C. Extension and Technical Training. Extension and technical training are rarely available to women farmers, even where they constitute the majority of producers. In 1988-89, only about five percent of agricultural extension resources worldwide were directed to female farmers. Further, only 15.6 percent of all extension personnel were women while several countries reported having no women extension agents at all.

FAO Field Projects have developed several innovative approaches to overcome the constraints preventing women from receiving adequate support. A few of these projects include the following:

- In Sierra Leone, emphasis is being placed on in-service training of extension field staff, with emphasis on participatory techniques.

- In Kenya's semi-arid zone, voluntary organizations are being promoted and mobilized to enable women farmers to receive technical assistance.

- In Tanzania, a women's project on irrigated agriculture is employing mainstream irrigation programme specialists to resolve the technical problems encountered by women farmers.

- In Zimbabwe, the establishment of women's savings groups are enabling them to attract the attention and assistance of extension agents.

- In Malawi, gender-oriented field guidelines have been developed and used for extension programme planning and execution.

- In Nepal, women development field officers are acting as group organizers linking extension services with the technical field staff of the Ministry of Agriculture.

- In Honduras, a ten-year programme to train peasant women as extension liaisons is improving rural food security through organic home gardening.

In addition to these direct assistance activities, FAO is developing a training module to be introduced into regular extension education programmes on gender in agricultural extension, which will help extension agents to understand and analyze women's roles in agriculture and their constraints to greater access to extension services, as well as means to overcome these constraints. The module will be adapted and field tested in each region before it is finally distributed to extension institutes throughout the world. Other activities include:

- The preparation of a document entitled Reorientation of Home Economics for Rural Development in Developing Countries in 1992. It provides a conceptual framework to introduce household technology, agricultural production and rural development problems of rural communities into educational programmes.

- The document, Rural Households and Resource Allocation for Development: An Ecosystem Perspective was published in 1993. This training manual is designed for post-secondary level education in agriculture, home economics and other rural development programmes and promotes a systems approach to the family that integrates ecological perspectives.

- The document, Management of Income-Generating Activities, was also prepared based on the experiences in Africa. The publication could serve as a guideline to develop policies and strategies to benefit rural women.

- Workshops were also held to discuss strategies to improve home economics extension and strengthen linkages between home economic and agricultural extension services and NGOs that work with rural women. A workshop in Thailand was attended by representatives of nine Asian countries, while another in Tanzania was attended by representatives from East and Southern Africa.

IV. ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A. Establishing the Linkages Between Women and Sustainable Development. While a large number of FAO activities are oriented toward enhancing women's roles in sustainable development, specific efforts are focused on researching and raising awareness on the links between rural women, poverty, population and the environment. A few of the more recent activities include:

- The development of technical guidelines that help development experts understand women's indigenous technical knowledge and their roles in the preservation of biodiversity. Other technical guidelines are planned that will deal with the issues of women and farm mechanization, appropriate technology and sustainability, and irrigation and water use.

- A resource document on 'Gender, Women and Community-wide Resource Management', was prepared for the African Forestry Commission.

- FAO is also preparing a technical book entitled Sustainable Forest Management, which considers gender issues as they relate to resource management and rural development.

- Case studies carried out over the biennium on activities that provide employment and income predominantly to women will be presented in future issues of the FAO Forest Harvesting Bulletin.

- FAO has also developed and executed a gender training programme for the forestry sector in Asia.

- In India, FAO and UNDP are developing a 'Community Based Programme for Sustainable Farming Systems in Fragile Areas' where gender issues are being addressed.

- In Latin America, two studies carried out in 1992 examined varieties of indigenous crops that have been domesticated and adapted by small-scale farmers. Both were concerned with the role of women in the management of genetic resources and were used as a contribution to 1993 World Food Day in the area of bio-diversity, as well as for the UN in its focus on indigenous populations.

- An "Expert Consultation on the Integration of Environmental and Sustainable Development Themes into Agricultural Education and Extension Programmes" was held in December 1993. One of the core papers addressed gender issues and the role of women in environment and sustainable development within the context of agricultural extension and training.

- In 1993, FAO staff participated in the Workshop on Human, Socio-Economic and Cultural Aspects of Plant Genetic Resources Conservation, organized by the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources Conservation, as well as the International Consultation on Advancing Women in Ecosystem Management, held at the World Bank.

- A draft document was prepared that will provide substantive content areas and guidelines to integrate environmental concerns into post-secondary agricultural and home economics training programs. The document will be targeted towards agricultural and rural households with limited resources, functioning on the basis of gender-differentiated roles, responsibilities and decision-making.

FAO staff also participated in the Pre-Conference Workshop on Reconceptualizing African Home Economics, co-sponsored by FAO, and the Home Economics Association for Africa Conference "Women, Families and the Environment." The Service presented a paper on "Promoting Ecologically Sustainable Development."

In parallel, the new FAO Special Action Programme (SAP) in the Sustainable Development of Rural Households is an umbrella programme that incorporates the content and methodology of FAO's Farming Systems Development and SEGA Programmes. The SAP provides a framework for actions that are designed to benefit rural farm households by focusing on the specific roles and needs of men, women and youth. The focus is on sustained improvement in the well-being of rural households by enhancing the productivity and sustainability of their farming systems through the development and dissemination of improved technologies, increased market access, enhanced policies, and improved support systems.

B. Rural Women, Population and Environment. FAO organized an Informal Round Table of Experts on Rural Women, Population and Environment in South East Asia, held in Bangkok, 22 - 25 February, 1994. The recently established United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Support Team for East and South East Asia, Bangkok, cooperated in the preparation of this meeting.

The Round Table is an integral part of FAO efforts to encourage conceptualization of integrated approaches in the context of country and regional development conditions and needs. The objectives of the Round Table are the following: (i) to identify priorities for Women/Population programmes in rural areas in view of development goals and socio-cultural, economic, structural and environmental conditions of South-East Asian countries; (ii) to select a conceptual and methodological framework for the development of Guidelines for the Integration of Women, Population and Environment in Rural Development Policies and Programmes in South-East Asia; and, (iii) to recommend future actions in using the Guidelines as tools in efforts to integrate Women/Population activities in rural development programmes and projects.

Co-operative arrangements will be sought by FAO with UNFPA, as well with other agencies and donors, for testing, further development, and use of the Guidelines through programmes and projects at country or inter-country levels, including through TCDC schemes, in South-East Asia.

FAO has also been engaged in the development of practical guidelines and manuals for population education addressing rural women while taking into account regional socio-cultural, economic and environmental conditions. Both technical assistance and financial support have been provided to the Philippines Center for Population and Development for the development of a Manual, "Rural Women and Population in South East Asia: A Population Education Manual for Outreach Workers," to be used as a practical tool for outreach workers engaged in rural development programmes and projects.

In addition, a UN Expert Group Meeting on Population and Women was held in Botswana in 1992 as part of the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994. A FAO paper examined rural women's needs for and attitudes

toward large families, while relating these to environmental deterioration, health and nutrition. With financing from UNFPA, FAO sponsored a Regional Workshop on Women, Population and Sustainable Agricultural Development in Zimbabwe in December 1991. The Workshop Report contains summaries of reports from six African countries. FAO is also preparing policy guidelines with UNFPA support on women, population and environment for Asia.

Further, as a follow-up to Agenda 21, FAO is producing Country-Specific Policy Guidelines on Women, Population and Environment for Asia. These guidelines are intended both for awareness-creation and as practical tools for the promotion of holistic approaches in policy design, programming and investment efforts. They are aimed at: (i) overcoming constraints to agricultural and rural development linked to gender inequalities, unfavourable demographic trends and environmental degradation; and, (ii) providing rural women with the economic and social conditions, as well as the technical means, to determine their own reproductive behaviour as an integral part of environmentally sustainable development. These guidelines are being drafted by specialists from ten Asian countries in collaboration FAO. With the assistance of UNFPA, the methodology for the production of these guidelines will be replicated in other regions in 1994 and 1995.

C. Nutrition and Food Security. FAO continues to recognize women's essential roles and their major constraints relating to nutrition and food security and continues to st ve to enhance women's roles as primary nutrition managers at the household level, as income providers and as food producers, and to increase their access to all necessary resources.

(1) The World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition. For many countries, the elaboration of comprehensive food security programmes aimed at improving household food security will be an essential step toward realizing the objectives laid out in the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition adopted by the International Conference on Nutrition in December 1992. As follow-up to this Plan, FAO provides assistance for the assessment of food security and nutritional status, which includes gender specific data collection and dissemination.

The World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition place particular emphasis on eliminating all forms of gender discrimination and on promoting gender equality. The Plan of Action on Nutrition seeks to promote and ensure meaningful equality between women and men through several mechanisms. These include: (i) understanding women's roles in the community; (ii) affording women and girls equitable access to economic opportunities and to education and training; and, (iii) adopting legal measures and social practices that guarantee women's equal participation in the development process by ensuring their access and rights to utilize productive resources, markets, credits, property and other family resources.

(2) Early Warning. At the national level, gender issues are considered in activities of the Early Warning Food Information Systems (EWFIS) relating to the surveillance, the development of national food and nutrition policies, and the incorporation of nutrition concerns into development policies and programmes. FAO is providing such gender-responsive assistance on behalf of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) as well as the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA). EWFIS are expanding their activities

in several countries to provide assistance in the formulation of more comprehensive food security programmes at the household level. On the basis of experienced gained in pilot activities in four countries in Africa, five more countries were added over the biennium, including two in Asia.

(3) Non-Traditional Foodstuffs in Household Food Security. FAO is also active in promoting household food security through greater reliance on traditional under-utilized foodstuffs in local food systems, where the responsibility for identifying, utilizing and preserving such food almost invariably falls to women. These foodstuffs are particularly important in areas where food shortages are common and malnutrition is widespread. The promotion of traditional foodstuffs offers a means of improving the nutritional and economic status of poor households. It can help reduce seasonal food shortages by diversifying diets, and serves to maintain social and cultural values and traditions. It also contributes to environmental sustainability since these foods are often multi-purpose and well adapted, less drought prone, less affected by pests and disease and permit better use of varied agro-ecological conditions.

FAO and IFAD have intensified their efforts to promote the production and consumption of under-utilized foods. For example, in 1992, the agencies jointly assisted the Government of Zambia at provincial and central levels to develop a policy to promote under-exploited traditional foodstuffs in a Vitamin A-deficient area of Luapula Province. Household level monitoring is being conducted with the help of the Central Statistical Office and with assistance from FAO, UNICEF and the World Bank. It is anticipated that the experiences gained from this activity, where women are the principal participants, can be replicated elsewhere.

V. PREPARATION FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

FAO has prepared an extensive programme of activities in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women in order to respond to the mandate given to all UN Agencies to (i) accelerate implementation of the NFLS, and (ii) assist Member Countries with national preparations. FAO's WID focal point, the Women in Agricultural Production and Rural Development Service, has elaborated the programme specifically in order to promote the role of women in agriculture and rural development in all Conference and pre-Conference activities at national, regional and international levels.

A. Technical and Financial Support at the National Level. In the fall of 1993, FAO launched the Programme "FAO Assistance in Support of Rural Women in Preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women" in order to provide technical and financial support to several Member Countries in their preparations for Beijing. A total of 16 countries have participated in the Programme: Perú, Honduras, the Eastern Caribbean (Barbados, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines), El Salvador, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Benin, Congo, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia, Cameroon, and the Philippines.

Phase I of the Programme provides support for (i) the preparation of sectoral reports on women in agriculture and rural development, and (ii) consultative workshops to discuss

critical issues affecting rural women which should be addressed in the report. FAO has prepared guidelines for preparation of the sectoral reports which are designed to encourage Ministries of Agriculture to make a substantial contribution to the national report by providing inputs on women in agriculture and rural development. The FAO guidelines are supplementary to the UN Secretariat Guidelines in order to assure comparability of the reports regionally and globally.

The objectives of Phase I activities are to: (i) ensure that comprehensive information and statistical data on rural women and agriculture is integrated into the national reports, and (ii) ensure that the WID Units of the Ministry of Agriculture, NGO's working with rural women, and rural women themselves are fully involved in preparatory processes. The funds provided allow the Ministry of Agriculture, or the responsible women's machinery in each country, to contract national-level expertise to assist in the preparation of a sectoral report on women in agriculture and rural development.

Phase II of the Programme seeks to strengthen national capacity to implement the Platform for Action, which will be adopted by the Beijing Conference. To this end, Phase II provides support to Ministries of Agriculture to improve information on women's contribution to agriculture in order to influence a more gender-sensitive approach to policies, programmes and projects.

Phase II of the programme will provide the training for a team of experts from the Ministry of Agriculture in gender oriented participatory rural appraisal. The team will then carry out participatory research in three different regions of each country to fill the information gaps identified and, most importantly, to allow rural women to discuss and make proposals on issues that concern them.

A series of audio-visuals will be produced in each country to: (i) document the research findings; (ii) provide an accurate picture of rural women's contribution to agricultural production and rural development; and, (iii) give voice to rural women's views and aspirations.

Both the research findings and the audio-visuals will be used to sensitize Ministry of Agriculture staff and policy-makers. Three workshops will be organized to disseminate information on, and discuss the degree of women's participation in agriculture, the obstacles they face, and how to make policies in the agricultural sector more responsive to rural women's needs. The results of the total experience, starting with the critical analysis carried out during the preparation of the sectoral report, the research findings, and the workshop discussions, will then be used to elaborate an action plan in each country for gender-sensitive national agricultural policies and programmes.

B. FAO's Support at the Regional Level.

Africa. A Regional Synthesis Report for Africa is currently being prepared by FAO based on the sectoral reports of the eight African countries participating in Phase I activities (Zimbabwe, Namibia, Tanzania, Congo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Uganda). Both the Regional Synthesis Report and the national sectoral reports will be sent to ECA and presented at the Regional Conference in Dakar. The issues raised in these documents will

then be incorporated into the regional plan of action for the advancement of women in Africa.

In addition, FAO is organizing a 1-day meeting prior to the Regional Conference. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the national sectoral reports as well as the Regional Synthesis Report. Based on these discussions, resolutions and a follow-up strategy will be prepared in order to facilitate implementation of the plan of action for Africa.

Asia and the Pacific. FAO presented a Statement on its activities in the region at the Regional Preparatory Conference in Jakarta. A small exhibition of photographs, charts and FAO publications were also displayed at the Conference.

Europe. FAO has also initiated a project to compile data and information and prepare country profiles on women's role in agriculture and rural development in selected countries of the Central and Eastern-European sub-region. The project will provide gender-disaggregated data to support the formulation of rural development programmes and policies at the national level. A total of ten countries have received assistance from FAO in the European region and include: Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia and Bulgaria.

In addition, FAO is organizing a one-day regional consultative meeting to discuss the findings of the reports and to produce recommendations on the mechanisms and policies required to address the needs of rural women in the region. The recommendations will then be presented at the Regional Conference in Vienna.

FAO is also active in the Working Party on Women and the Agricultural Family in Rural Development, established under the European Commission on Agriculture. At its Seventh Session, 18-21 October 1994, the Working Party plans to adopt a resolution on the socio-economic position of rural women with recommendations for Beijing and raise awareness on the importance of rural women's participation in national preparatory activities for the Conference.

Latin America and the Caribbean. Support for the preparation of sectoral reports on women in agriculture and rural development has been provided to several additional countries in the region, including Mexico, Costa Rica, Chile and Venezuela.

FAO is also in the process of preparing a regional document that analyzes the situation of rural women in the region during the period 1985-1995. The document will be based on the national reports prepared for Beijing, including the sectoral reports on women in agriculture and rural development, as well as on the outputs of a sub-regional workshop on Women, Rural Development and Decentralization Processes, to be held in Caracas, Venezuela, 23-25 August 1994. FAO is organizing a meeting in Mexico to review the draft document and, based on these discussions, a revised report will be presented and discussed at the Regional Conference in Mar del Plata and included in the regional report presented at Beijing.

FAO is also in the process of publishing a case study on Women in the Peruvian Amazon, which was an additional output of Phase I activities in preparation for Beijing. The

case study analyzes the situation and roles of women in the social and economic context of the Peruvian Amazon. Included in the report are actions that need to be taken on a variety of fronts to raise the status of women in the region.

Near East. Support for the preparation of sectoral reports on women in agriculture and rural development has been provided to an additional 17 countries under the Regional Programme of Action for Women in Agriculture in the Near East (RPAWANE). The countries participating in the this exercise are: Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The RPAWANE reports will be consolidated into a Synthesis Report on Women in Agriculture in the Near East and submitted to ESCWA as a regional input to the Beijing Conference. The recommendations of the Synthesis Report will then be translated into a Plan of Action for Women in Agriculture in the Near East that would cover the next decade (1996-2005). FAO also plans to hold a meeting to bring together all country coordinators, relevant UN Agencies, and selected NGO's to review the Synthesis Report and enrich the Plan of Action through a participatory approach. Once endorsed, the Plan will guide FAO's future work and orientations based on the priorities and need-driven requirements of the countries of the Region.

C. Promoting the Role of Rural Women at the International Level. While FAO has undertaken activities in support of rural women in national and regional level preparations, more work needs to be done to ensure that important issues such as food security, migration, environmental degradation and other issues which have a strong impact on rural communities are discussed at Beijing. It is FAO's role as the lead UN Agency for agriculture and rural development to offer information on these issues in order to stress their importance for Conference deliberations and outcomes.

To these ends, FAO is preparing specialized information materials to relay simple and concise messages on rural women's roles in sustainable agriculture and food security. FAO will also be updating its bibliography on WID documents and producing an activities report detailing its support to rural women and the on-going women in development programme. Both documents will be distributed at Beijing.

FAO has also prepared the section on "Women's access to lands and natural resources" for the 1994 update of the World Survey on Women and contributed to the section on "Women's access to credit and financial institutions". In addition, FAO has participated in the global information campaign regarding the Conference by distributing and, where necessary, supplementing the materials provided by the UN Information Division.

In addition, the Women in Agricultural Production and Rural Development Service has developed an internal information campaign to inform FAO staff about the Conference and to encourage their contribution to preparatory activities. To this end, an information packet about the Conference, which includes an official letter, an information note, and both UN Secretariat and FAO Guidelines for national report writing, has been sent to the technical divisions, FAO Representatives (to UNDP Representatives in countries where there is no FAOR) and to the Regional Offices.